

Hobbies

American Eagles too costly, paper says

By Roger Boye

A hobby newspaper has suggested that Uncle Sam is charging too much for proof specimens of its American Eagle gold and silver coins.

The proof coins—made for collectors rather than investors—cost the same this year as in 1988 despite a drop in the price of precious metals during the past 12 months. Officials are asking \$585 for a one-ounce proof gold Eagle and \$23 for the one-ounce silver coin.

“Such a dramatic decline in the price of bullion should have led to cuts in American Eagle prices,” said an editorial in *Numismatic News*. The proof gold coin should cost no more than \$530 to compensate for a \$55 per ounce drop in gold prices during the past year and the silver coin, no more than \$21.50.

Meanwhile, the U. S. Mint reported that sales of uncirculated American Eagles—the type bought by precious-metal investors—are almost the same this year as in 1988. The government sold 310,000 troy ounces of gold

Eagles to wholesale distributors during the first seven months of 1989, up six percent from the same period in 1988, and 4.3 million troy ounces of silver coins, about 1.5 percent less than in 1988.

Uncirculated Eagle coins are sold by banks and coin shops for the price of the metal plus a small commission. The proof coins are sold to collectors by the government at set prices.

The gold American Eagle was named the country's top new product of 1986—its inaugural year—by *Fortune* magazine.



Canada has produced the first proof specimens of its popular Maple Leaf coins to mark the 10th anniversary of the gold Maple Leaf.

Prices range from \$35 for a one-ounce silver Maple Leaf in proof to \$675 for a one-ounce gold coin. For more information or to place an order, call the Royal Canadian Mint, toll free, at (800) 267-1871.

Since 1987, the uncirculated Maple Leaf has ranked as the world's most widely sold gold

bullion coin. Last year, Canada produced 1.2 million ounces of such coins, about double the amount of gold used for Uncle Sam's American Eagle.

Experts say that many gold investors prefer buying the Maple Leaf because of its .999 fine gold purity. The gold Eagle contains small amounts of copper and silver, which harden the alloy and enhance the color.



Three coinage-related bills introduced in Congress this summer probably have little chance of becoming law, experts say. Among other things, the new proposals call for:

- Gold, silver and bronze medals to commemorate in 1990 the 100th anniversary of Yosemite National Park;

- Three coin types to mark in 1990 the 200th anniversary of the death of Benjamin Franklin;

- Three coin types to commemorate in 1991 the 50th anniversary of the United Service Organizations (USO), a private agency that assists U. S. military personnel.